

# INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

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## REGIONAL CONTEXT

### *Dublin's Place and Development in the Region*

Dublin was founded in 1810 as a farming and trading village. Substantial development did not occur until the 1970s with the completion of Interstate 270, the construction of the Ashland Chemical Company research and development center, and the establishment of Muirfield Village and the Muirfield Golf Club by Jack Nicklaus. During the 1980s, Dublin was Ohio's fastest growing municipality. Although growth slowed somewhat in the early 1990s, new home construction continued at approximately 500 units per year and commercial development averaged 400,000 square feet annually. Between 2000 and ~~2005~~2010, Dublin continued to grow at a substantial pace, with over three million square feet of commercial development and over ~~2,200~~3,700 new ~~single-family~~housing units.

With more than 24½ square miles of land, and a residential population of approximately ~~40,000~~ 43,000, Dublin is home to ~~an estimated 52,000 jobs~~ approximately 3,000 businesses and has an estimated daytime population of up to 65,000. ~~Dublin and~~ remains one of the fastest growing communities in the region. Its national reputation for quality development and the natural beauty of the area have produced the right combination for rapid growth.

Strategically located at the juncture of U.S. 33 and I-270, Dublin is a prominent suburban center in the Columbus metropolitan region (~~Map 0.1~~). Since 2000, significant land masses have been annexed into Dublin along the City's western periphery. A variety of development proposals have been submitted within northwest and southwest areas of the City that have focused on residential development and retail centers. Planning efforts for the ~~Central Ohio Innovation Center (COIC)~~ West Innovation District along the U.S. 33 corridor ~~and the Bridge Street District within the inner belt of I-270~~ will play an important role in the City's future, with substantial development of additional office and laboratory uses, supported by mixed use commercial centers ~~and walkable neighborhoods~~.

### *Regional Setting and Conditions*

Building on exceptional growth from 1981 ~~to 2000~~ through the 2000s, regional accessibility and high development standards, Dublin continues to be an economic leader within Central Ohio. This is demonstrated by a population that has increased more than tenfold since 1980 and an employment base that has grown exponentially. (For more information on recent trends, refer to *Chapter Eight – Demographics*.)

Other areas within the metropolitan region have also developed employment centers and high quality residential development. These areas include Hilliard, located to the south of Dublin; Polaris, an office and retail complex north of the I-270 outer belt adjacent to Interstate 71; and New Albany, a master planned residential community and employment center located in the northeastern metropolitan area. Easton Town Center, a large regional mall with significant office

development, is located at Morse Road and I-270. Recent trends also show an increased interest in high quality urban residential housing in downtown Columbus and the surrounding 'inner ring' suburban neighborhoods.

## **II-ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY PLAN**

The Community Plan is a guide for City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission as they assess the location, character, and extent of proposed public and private development in Dublin. The Plan's policies and recommendations will be implemented over time through rezonings and subdivisions of land and the location and construction of public improvements. The Plan is designed as a short-, medium- and long-range guide for decision-making. As a guiding document, the Community Plan should be adjusted and reassessed at least every five years.

Prior to the 1997 Community Plan, the City had previously followed the recommendations of the 1988 Community Plan, the 1993 Southwest Area Plan, the Bright Road Area Plan, the 1994 Mt. Auburn Economic Development Strategy report and various technical engineering studies. Since its formal adoption and subsequent amendments and updates, the ~~1997~~ Dublin Community Plan has served as the City's key source for policy information.

The Ohio Revised Code (Section 713.02) states that it is the Planning and Zoning Commission's duty to make plans and maps of any portion of the City, and the lands outside it, which relate to the planning of the City. Specifically, the plans or maps show the Planning and Zoning Commission's recommendations for:

*...the general location, character, and extent of streets, alleys, ways, viaducts, bridges, waterways, waterfronts, subways, boulevards, parkways, parks, playgrounds, aviation fields, and other public grounds, ways and open spaces; the general location of public buildings and other public property; the general location and extent of public utilities and terminals, whether publicly or privately owned or operated, for water, light, sanitation, transportation, communication, power and other purposes; and the removal, relocation, widening, narrowing, vacating, abandonment, change of use or extension of such public ways, grounds, open spaces, buildings, property, utilities, or terminals.*

Adoption of the Community Plan provides many distinct advantages:

### ***Consistency in decision-making***

Land use decisions have the greatest effect when they are made on a consistent basis over time. The Community Plan allows decision makers the opportunity to keep a steady point of reference for land use actions. A Community Plan that is sometimes ignored and sometimes rigorously applied will eventually lose effectiveness, and inconsistent development patterns will emerge.

### ***Strong legal support***

Zoning-related actions by a community are generally viewed favorably by courts at all levels, as long as those actions are not made in an "arbitrary or capricious" fashion. Using the Plan to support those decisions can help ensure that actions are properly taken.

### ***Wise use of resources***

The City's resources need to be protected and used efficiently. These include natural resources, financial resources, infrastructure (roads, utilities, etc.) and buildings. A carefully drafted Community Plan can guide the wise use of these resources. This includes support for obtaining, prioritizing and using financial resources such as grant funds. The

Community Plan, supported with a capital improvements program, can be used to implement City projects such as parkland acquisition, recreation facilities planning, utility extensions and road improvements.

### *Linking Planning and Zoning*

The relationship between the Community Plan and the Zoning Code is a critical one that is commonly misunderstood. To appreciate this connection it is necessary to recognize the differences between both documents and how each should be applied.

*The Community Plan is a statement of policy; The Zoning Code is a law.*

The Community Plan is a policy document which states general principles and notes specific issues upon which development in the City will be based. The Plan itself has no direct, legal authority; its adoption does not regulate or change the use of land. Only a modification to the Zoning Code can change uses to which the land may be developed or alter the regulations affecting that land.

*The Community Plan reflects the future use of land. The Zoning Code affects the use of land today.*

This means that the primary difference between the Community Plan and Zoning Code is a matter of timing. The Community Plan includes a Future Land Use Map that shows the intended use of land at the end of the planning period, which could be as much as 30 years into the future; the Zoning Code regulates a Zoning District Map that shows land as it is permitted to be used today. The Future Land Use Map is not intended to be immediately translated into zoning. Rather, the concepts and policies associated with the Community Plan are intended to be implemented over time. One of the ways to implement the Plan is to revise zoning districts and development regulations within the Zoning Code, as well as considering the future rezoning of properties as opportunities arise.

One point of uncertainty with property owners is the effect that a Community Plan has on the current use of land. Since adoption of the Community Plan does not create an immediate change in zoning, existing uses are not affected. In fact, even when zoning is changed, legally established uses are permitted to continue (subject to restrictions noted in the Zoning Code) even though they may not comply with zoning.

### *A Time for Change*

Deciding when to implement the Community Plan through changes in zoning is one of the most difficult decisions faced by any community. Once the Community Plan is adopted, the first tendency is to change zoning to directly reflect the Plan's intent. This response does not take into account the fact that the Community Plan represents a long-range view of the City. The Future Land Use Map and the Zoning Map are not intended to be identical.

In some cases consideration of zoning changes will be appropriate, particularly where the Community Plan indicates the intent to ~~reduce~~ **modify** land use intensities now permitted by the Zoning Code. For example, if the Community Plan indicates the desire to reduce commercial development along a highway, timely zoning changes may be necessary to prevent development that conflicts with the Plan.

In most instances, implementation of the Community Plan will be less immediate and obvious. Over time, incremental change can occur as private development requests are made throughout the City. The Plan should be utilized to guide development decisions, particularly the appropriateness of proposed land use changes or the requirements that must be met

to obtain a development approval. Extension of utilities and roadway improvements are just two examples of elements that may be necessary prior to consideration of a change in zoning. The Plan serves as a measuring stick by which small, individual decisions move the City toward its future goals.

### **III.—PLANNING PROCESS**

The ~~2007~~ update of the Community Plan was a multi-year effort that included an extensive two-year public input process, an assessment of existing conditions, the development of alternative future land use scenarios and the testing (via computer models) of multiple alternatives for transportation and utility system improvements. Following significant input and testing, a preferred land use scenario was selected at a Joint Work Session of City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission. The adopted Plan reflects a refined version of this preferred scenario. The five-year update (adoption pending in 2013) was conducted to incorporate major planning initiatives undertaken by the City since 2007 and to ensure that technical information and policy recommendations remain up-to-date and relevant.

#### **A.—Study Area**

The ~~2007~~ Community Plan *study area* includes the land within approximately three miles of Dublin's corporate boundaries to the west, southwest, north and northeast of Dublin. It also includes portions of the City of Columbus to the east and south, and part of the City of Hilliard to the south. The study area is approximately 230 square miles, whereas Dublin itself comprises just over 24.5 square miles. This geographic area was selected largely for traffic analysis purposes based upon known regional traffic patterns. By contrast, the *planning area* is approximately 37 square miles, and is the focus for land use and fiscal analysis. The planning area corresponds to the existing City of Dublin corporate limits as well as established water and sewer contract boundaries with the City of Columbus.

#### **B.—Public Participation**

The 1997 Dublin Community Plan was the culmination of a significant public involvement process that resulted in the adoption of an award-winning planning and policy document. That process spanned almost five years and included many public meetings. The effort was led by an active steering committee that identified the key policies, principles and expectations defined by the community for the first time.

The goal of ~~this the 2007~~ update was to meaningfully involve as many citizens as possible in order to re-evaluate the basic principles and policies established in the 1997 Plan. Dublin citizens were involved from the outset of the planning process, working with City staff to identify major issues and opportunities facing Dublin. While various components of the Plan were updated in 2013, the core planning principles and recommendations of the 2007 update remain largely unchanged. A key goal of the 2013 update was to expand access to the Community Plan by converting the document from a printed book format to an interactive website. As a digital document, the Plan is now easier to maintain on a periodic basis and includes opportunities for direct public feedback through online comments. Public comments on various topics may be viewed throughout the Community Plan website. The various components of the planning process used to update the Plan are described below:

##### *Citizen Participation Committee*

To generate public interest and inform residents about the Community Plan, a Citizen Participation Committee was created at the onset of the planning process. Approximately 25 Dublin residents, corporate citizens, and community leaders

volunteered to develop methods by which Dublin residents and business owners could be actively engaged in the process. The Committee developed an advertising campaign and media plan to garner public input. Members served as ambassadors to network with other community organizations and civic groups. Methods used to enhance public input included, but were not limited to, a website; telephone hotline; civic association mailers; personal notifications; magazine and newspaper articles and notices; special event displays; and public access television segments and notices. While not responsible for direct policy decisions, the Committee served a critical role to increase public awareness of the Community Plan update.

### *Key Users and Stakeholder Interviews*

During the summer of 2005, initial interviews were conducted to lay the foundation for updating the 1997 Dublin Community Plan. Individuals from various segments of the community were interviewed to identify the strengths, weaknesses and usability of the 1997 planning document. Public input from various professionals and policy makers identified the need for a more user-friendly document. Other interviews with key individuals having a significant stake in the future of Dublin were also held to identify issues seen as critical to the ongoing success of Dublin as a premier community.

### *Speaker Series*

As a means to garner public involvement and provide information on current planning topics relevant to Dublin's future, two speaker sessions were held as part of the plan update. Walter M. Kulash, P.E., Principal and Senior Traffic Engineer with the Orlando-based planning firm of Glatting Jackson Kercher Anglin Lopez Rinehart, Inc., discussed the emerging concept of "Livable Traffic." His discussion noted the importance of balancing traffic flow and efficiency with the environmental and aesthetic impacts that public road improvements can have on community character and quality of life. A second speaker session focused on the topic of "Building Better Communities." Planning Director Bob Martin and civic leaders Julian Bibb and Ernie Bacon, of Franklin, Tennessee, traveled to Dublin to provide insights and lessons from a community that has experienced similar growth challenges. The panel discussion provided an opportunity to talk about historic district revitalization, design quality and form, and the importance of the development process in achieving community expectations.

### *Community Surveys*

As part of the 1997 Community Plan process, a statistically balanced telephone survey of Dublin residents was conducted to broaden public participation and identify important planning issues. Over 500 adults were interviewed over a one-week period, and results showed that residents overwhelmingly agreed that Dublin was an "excellent" or "good" place to live (91 percent). The survey identified key issues that serve as important components of the Plan: reducing traffic congestion, improving schools, managing growth, revitalizing Historic Dublin, saving natural areas, creating parks and protecting rural character. The visioning process completed for the 1997 Dublin Community Plan further evaluated these key ideas.

Since the 1997 Dublin Community Plan, the City has continued to track the opinions and satisfaction of residents. Every two years the City conducts a community satisfaction survey, which gauges resident's perceptions of local government. Surveys ~~in 2000, 2002, 2004 and 2006~~ over the past decade generally confirm the same themes. Today, ~~more than 97~~ 98 percent of residents rate Dublin as an "excellent" or "good" place to live, while growth management and traffic congestion continue to be identified as top issues that future policy decisions must address. In 2010, 85 percent of respondents gave excellent/good ratings to Dublin for being a well-planned community.



## *Student Involvement*

In 2005, parents and students at Bailey Elementary participated in a Conservation Design Workshop. Hosted by the 4th and 5th grade Conservation Club, the City provided a presentation and project examples of conservation subdivision design. The workshop culminated in the creation of students' own conservation subdivision layouts, and group projects were displayed in municipal buildings.

## *Working Groups*

In order to complete preliminary inventory and analysis work for individual chapters of the Community Plan update, a series of working groups comprised of more than 60 City staff members was created. These groups performed technical work and identified critical issues to consider as part of the planning process. A steering committee of City management leaders coordinated the compilation of technical information and provided key technical decisions to support the update process.

## *Community Workshops and Summits*

In May 2005, preliminary phases of the planning process included a series of workshops to explore the validity of adopted policies and previously identified planning issues. Policy discussions and presentations culminated in a Community Plan Summit in August 2005 to present findings to the public. Further discussion with City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission later resulted in the adoption of Resolution 64-06, which established ten interim land use principles as a policy guide for the evaluation of development applications. These principles are intended to be the basis of land use decisions and can be found in *Chapter Three – Land Use*.

## *Area Plan Meetings*

Certain areas of the City have special circumstances that require additional attention and planning efforts. Ten general planning areas were targeted as part of the Community Plan update. During June and July 2005, a series of meetings was held throughout Dublin to obtain input from residents about the future of their respective areas of the City. Following these initial meetings, concept plans were created that were used to seek additional input during a second round of public forums during August and October 2005. The following areas were identified by City Council for detailed study:

- Avery Road Area
- Bright Road Area
- Coffman Park Area
- Historic Dublin Area ([replaced with Bridge Street District Plan in 2013](#))
- Northwest/Glacier Ridge Area
- O'Shaughnessy Hills Area (removed prior to adoption [in 2007](#))
- Sawmill/SR 161 Area ([replaced with Bridge Street District Plan in 2013](#))
- Southwest Area
- Summit View/Sawmill Area
- U.S. 33 Corridor Area

The 2013 Plan update includes revisions to nearly all of the Special Area Plans. Some of these are minor modifications necessary to accurately reflect new development, recent zoning approvals, or completed infrastructure improvements. Others constitute major revisions based on new planning initiatives undertaken since 2007; these include:

- Bridge Street District. This area plan is based on the Bridge Street Corridor Vision Report (2010) and related planning initiatives and implementation efforts. It replaces the 2007 Historic Dublin and Sawmill/SR 161 Area Plans.
- West Innovation District. This area plan is based on the Economic Advancement Zone Plan (2011), which was undertaken as a refinement of the 2007 U.S. 33 Corridor Area Plan. It is included as a separate area plan in addition to other portions of the U.S. 33 Corridor.
- Northwest/Glacier Ridge Area. This area plan was updated in 2011 as part of the Hyland-Croy Road Corridor Character Study.

These separate planning efforts included extensive public input processes focused on issues and opportunities facing each area respectively. Refer to the Special Area Plans section for more information.

### *Community Plan Open Houses and Other Public Input Opportunities*

In June 2006, an open house was held at the Dublin Community Recreation Center to provide a status-check at the mid-point of the planning process. Display boards describing policies, land use scenarios and draft area plans were presented for public review and comment. Over 115 people participated in the three-hour event, which included presentations to explain the planning process and an extensive question-and-answer session. Another open house was held in March 2007, that featured key components of the developing chapters. As the draft process neared completion, four open houses were held in June 2007. The first two events focused on area plan concepts, while the final two evenings provided an opportunity for the public to review a full draft of the Community Plan. Printed copies of the draft were made available, along with updated display boards of area plans and policy statements for each chapter. At each of these events, members of the public were given the opportunity to study plans, pose questions to City staff, and provide written comments. Feedback from all events was provided to City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission.

In June 2012, an open house was held at the Dublin Community Recreation Center to publicly kick off the 2012-2013 amendment process and to introduce the community to the new website format being developed for the Community Plan. Subsequent public interaction has focused on the use of electronic newsletters, public comment options on the Community Plan website and a webcast hosted on the new website to introduce the final draft updates to the public in March 2013.

### *Joint Work Sessions*

The 1997 Dublin Community Plan was a comprehensive document that clearly reflected community values and expectations. The basic framework of the plan remains much the same as verified by numerous surveys, workshops and interviews. As part of the planning process, members of City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission took a lead role in making key policy decisions for the 2007 Community Plan update. Through public input and the efforts of Dublin's elected and appointed officials, groundwork established by the 1997 Steering Committee has been updated to reflect Dublin's changing role within Central Ohio. A number of joint work sessions between City Council and the

Planning and Zoning Commission were also conducted between 2011 and 2013 as part of the Bridge Street District planning initiative; the results and recommendations of these public meetings are reflected in the 2013 Plan update.

## Regional Coordination

Throughout the ~~2007~~ Community Plan update process, the City of Dublin has worked closely with surrounding jurisdictions to discuss the evolution of the Plan and regional issues. During the 1997 planning process, workshops were held with area leaders to discuss regional land use and transportation problems. With increasing growth pressures, ~~this the~~ 2007 update ~~has~~ placed an even greater emphasis on regionalism. Dublin has made it a priority to strive for planned, well-managed and responsible growth that is properly coordinated with surrounding jurisdictions. The following are examples of those efforts:

### *Regional Connections*

Dublin is a member community of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC). Since 2004, MORPC has facilitated a Regional Growth Strategy with the goal of developing a shared vision for the future of Central Ohio. Community leaders from the City of Dublin have served on the Regional Connections Steering Committee, helping to guide the joint planning process. Regional planning efforts are on-going, and Dublin will continue to play a role in these endeavors.

### *Hayden Run Corridor*

Dublin has pursued ongoing dialogue with the City of Columbus, City of Hilliard and other jurisdictions to evaluate and plan for development south of Dublin in the environmentally sensitive Hayden Run corridor. Major goals and accomplishments have included achieving regionally acceptable land use plans, coordinating transportation corridors and accounting for infrastructure costs of future development. Dublin continues to work with the City of Columbus to encourage managed growth to the south and west of the City.

### *Northwest Area Traffic Study*

The City has worked closely with area jurisdictions to evaluate traffic impacts in Northwest Columbus, Dublin and Hilliard. Regional policy discussions through MORPC will continue to highlight development issues and work toward regional cooperation.

### *U.S. 33 Corridor*

The U.S. 33 Corridor Group was established in 2004 to discuss regional growth issues northwest of Dublin. Jurisdictions along U.S. 33, located between and including Dublin and Marysville, have been engaged in cooperative discussion to consider the impacts and coordination of land use, infrastructure and transportation improvements along the corridor. Consideration of cooperative development techniques can benefit all jurisdictions along U.S. 33.

### ~~Washington~~ *Township Comprehensive Plans*

The City has continued to foster a close relationship with Washington Township by participating in the development of the Township's latest planning document. Working in an advisory role, the City provided information to ensure coordination between both planning processes. The City has also provided information to Jerome Township for



consideration in the development of its latest comprehensive plan. Updates to the U.S. 33 Corridor Area Plan, included in the 2013 Plan update, reflect shared planning and development goals for much of this area.

In addition to these major initiatives, the City has engaged in ongoing dialogue with county engineers and surrounding jurisdictions to encourage increased coordination and cooperation. With traffic congestion and land use issues transcending political boundaries, regional efforts have played an important role in shaping the ~~2007~~-Dublin Community Plan.

### *Upper Scioto Watershed Planning Partnership*

In 2010 the City joined the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission's Upper Scioto Planning Partnership (USPP). The Planning Partnership was initiated as part of the Ohio Balanced Growth Initiative, a state program developed to protect and restore Ohio's watersheds. Stakeholders and community representatives in the Upper Scioto Watershed worked together to designate 'Priority Areas' that promote conservation efforts in portions of the watershed with significant ecological value; (re)development in areas that efficiently use and maximize return on existing infrastructure; and continued agricultural practices in the areas that are most valuable for agricultural activity. Dublin City Council formally endorsed the Upper Scioto Balanced Growth Plan in August 2012 with Resolution 41-12. The City's endorsement includes a commitment to continue participating in the Planning Partnership through continued dialogue and monitoring of Plan implementation with other Partnership members.

## ~~D.~~ Public Review and Adoption

Following the June 2007 open house events, the Community Plan was made available for a 30-day public comment period. Printed copies of the Plan were displayed at key locations throughout the City and a digital format was posted on the City website. Members of the public were invited to provide feedback via the website, by mail, or by speaking directly with City representatives.

Ordinance 58-07 received a first reading at City Council on August 6, 2007 and was forwarded to the Planning and Zoning Commission for review. Three special Planning and Zoning Commission meetings were held in August 2007 at the Dublin Community Recreation Center, during which members of the public were invited to comment on the Plan. Following public input, the Planning and Zoning Commission provided a recommendation to City Council in September 2007. Ordinance 58-07 adopting the updated Dublin Community Plan was heard multiple times to provide additional public discussion and was passed by City Council on December 10, 2007.

[A description of the 2013 public review and adoption process will be added following adoption by City Council]

## HOW TO USE THE PLAN

The ~~2007~~-Dublin Community Plan is to be used as a guide for land use and development decisions within the City. Dublin will continue working cooperatively with surrounding jurisdictions, and the Plan provides guidance on a variety of issues such as: community character, land use, environmental quality, transportation, community and public facilities, historic preservation and open space, parks and recreation.

The Plan is organized into ten chapters:

- 1 Dublin's Foundations
- 2 Community Character & Environment
- 3 Land Use
- 4 Transportation
- 5 Community Facilities
- 6 Historic Preservation
- 7 Fiscal Analysis
- 8 Demographics
- 9 Utilities
- 10 Implementation

Each chapter identifies issues and proposes objectives and strategies that are to be used to guide development decisions. The document is flexible and should not be regarded as rigid; it should be applied thoughtfully with discretion and judgment.

Proposals for new development in Dublin will be examined for compatibility with surrounding uses and consistency with the Plan's policies, area plan concepts, objectives and strategies. The ~~2007~~ Dublin Community Plan, as well as other resource documents, will help to assess potential development impacts. The Plan is a living document and will be updated and revised as conditions and circumstances within and around the Dublin community change. ~~The City's website (including web-based GIS) and other supporting media (such as CDs) are intended to provide alternative methods for accessing the Plan, including information on interim modifications that will supplement this document. The Community Plan website is intended to provide comprehensive access to the Plan using computers and mobile devices. This format includes interactive web-based maps, key word search capabilities, public comment options and other intuitive design features to assist users in accessing and understanding the Community Plan, and to improve citizens' ability to actively monitor and take part in Plan implementation and periodic revision.~~